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## Media Release

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### **Delaware Higher Education Institutions Join Attorney General Biden in the Fight to Protect Children**

*Stewards of Children program trains adults to recognize and report the signs of child abuse; Program aims to train 35,000 Delawareans*

**Newark** – Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden and leaders from four of Delaware’s largest institutions of higher education today announced a significant expansion of a statewide program to train adults to recognize and respond to the signs of child sexual abuse. The presidents of the University of Delaware, Delaware State University, Delaware Technical Community College, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Wilmington University announced today from the University of Delaware that they will bring the *Stewards of Children* training to their campuses to educate faculty, staff and students.

“It is not a child’s job to protect him or herself from abuse, it’s our job as adults,” Attorney General Biden said, noting that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18, yet only one in ten abused kids reaches out for help. “This program gives adults the tools and the information we need to protect kids, who in 9 out of 10 cases are victimized by someone they know. Everyone in Delaware is a mandatory reporter – we are all obligated to intervene when we see a child in danger, but we don’t always know what to look for. When only one in ten abused children reaches out for help, we know that it falls to the adults to see the signs and make the call.”

Last September, Attorney General Biden, the YMCA of Delaware, and Prevent Child Abuse Delaware announced a collaborative partnership to train 35,000 Delawareans, or about 5% of the state’s population in the *Stewards of Children* program in five years. At work in 48 states and 10 countries, the *Stewards of Children* program is designed to teach adults the signs of child sex abuse to prevent it and report suspected incidents.

“This is an important opportunity for the higher education community to be proactive in our defense of children,” said University of Delaware President Patrick T. Harker. “In the first phase of this program, we will train nearly 1,100 individuals affiliated with the University of Delaware, and we plan to take this training throughout Delaware – to all three counties – to ensure that everyone associated with UD acts immediately and responsibly on behalf of the children in our care.”

The program highlights facts about abuse, common situations in which it occurs, ways to talk to children and adults about it, and simple and effective protection strategies. Taught by trained facilitators to the general public, the program is brief, inexpensive, and effective. Participants report a 38% increase in knowledge and attitudes about child sex abuse.

“Delaware State University has on its faculty one of our State’s first trainers to be certified for the *Stewards of Children* program, and she has already partnered with community stakeholders in Kent

County to facilitate training with all those groups,” said President Harry L. Williams. “We will also implement a schedule that involves the training of all 900-plus employees on the DSU campus.”

Dr. Orlando J. George, Jr., President of Delaware Tech, said, “It is critical that Delaware Tech employees and our future graduates have access to every tool and educational resource possible to ensure that young people in Delaware are protected and that they have a voice. The Stewards of Children program will enable us to build on what we already do to protect children on campus and raise the bar when it comes to increasing awareness of child abuse. It is a natural fit for the College to serve as an active partner in this program, and more important, it is the responsible thing to do.”

“Wilmington University's commitment to the prevention of child maltreatment is evidenced by our pioneering effort to offer a Child Advocacy Studies certificate,” said Dr. Jim Wilson, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Wilmington University. “The Stewards of Children program is another tool in our toolbox to educate the Wilmington University community to recognize and report suspected child abuse.”

Since the program launched in Delaware, more than 2,000 Delawareans have been trained, including Department of Justice employees, 350 Family Court personnel and more than 100 firefighters and paramedics. Biden has asked the legislative Joint Finance Committee to appropriate \$60,000 in the coming budget year so DOJ can train an additional 10,000 Delawareans in the *Stewards of Children Program*. Last year, Biden received the Darkness to Light Foundation’s Voice of Courage Award for the DOJ’s efforts to bring *Stewards of Children* training to Delaware.

All reports of child abuse and neglect in the State of Delaware should be made to the 24 hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at **1-800-292-9582**. Individuals and organizations can learn more about the Stewards of Children program and schedule a training session by calling Prevent Child Abuse Delaware at 302-425-7490 or visiting [www.pcadelaware.org](http://www.pcadelaware.org).

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